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LETTER DATED 22 MARCH 1991 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
ISRAEL TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Further to my note dated 21 March 1991 in reference to your note EOSG 681 of 6 March 1991, regarding Security Council resolution 681 of 20 December 1990 concerning the idea of convening a meeting of the high contracting parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, I have the honour to request that this note, a copy of which is attached herewith, be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Yoram ARIDOR
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Note verbale dated 21 March 1991 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations presents his compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and, in reference to his note EOSG 681 of 6 March 1991, regarding Security Council resolution 681 of 20 December 1990 concerning the idea of convening a meeting of the high contracting parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, has the honour to communicate the following:

There is no precedent for such a meeting.

There is no basis in the Convention for convening such a meeting and the Convention makes no reference to such proposed actions.

The proposal to convene a conference of the high contracting parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention is an astonishing act of singling out Israel. In the course of the 40 years in which the Convention has been in effect, millions of innocent civilians have been killed in dozens of wars. The international community did not once see fit to convene the signatories of the Convention for any of the many deliberate and gross violations of the Convention.

Since the end of World War II, 20 million people have been killed and a further 60 million have been wounded, imprisoned, or forced to flee their homes or countries. Nine out of 10 of these victims were civilians. According to a special study of 36 major ongoing and active conflicts in 1988 and 1989, at least 5 million people have been killed in these conflicts and at least 32 million have been wounded, imprisoned, internally displaced or forced to become refugees. The contracting parties have never met to debate actions which amount to genuine breaches of the Geneva Conventions.

The unprecedented call to convene the contracting parties of the Convention is a dangerous move to politicize an international humanitarian law instrument and severely undermines its effectiveness. The proposed meeting would clearly politicize and could gravely harm any humanitarian work that would be unavoidably affected by such a politically motivated meeting.

Israel's reservation with respect to the formal application of the Convention vis-à-vis the territories is widely known, nevertheless Israel has undertaken to apply all the humanitarian provisions of the Convention on a de facto basis. In doing so and contrary to some of the contracting parties demanding the convening of the meeting, Israel cooperates fully with the International Committee of the Red Cross. Israel is in regular contact with the International Committee of the Red Cross personnel on an ongoing basis to enable them to fulfil their functions under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The holding of such a meeting would constitute a subversion and abuse of the Geneva Conventions, that would, in the end, undermine rather than contribute to the goals of the Conventions and would surely have adverse impact on their future implementation.

In view of the above, Israel categorically objects to the idea of convening a meeting of the high contracting parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention.
